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U.S. DISTRICT COURT E.D.N.Y.
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BROOKLYN OFFICE

Betty Golembeski
101 71st Street
Brooklyn, New York 11209

February 20, 2008

Honorable Jack B. Weinstein
225 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, NY 11201-1818

72-CV-1041

Dear Judge Weinstein,

I have two children who are growing up in the NYC public school system. They both went to PS 185 in Brooklyn and then both had the great good luck to be accepted into and attend Mark Twain in Coney Island. While in Mark Twain, they were in a very diverse and exciting environment. If my children did not get into Mark Twain, they would have attended our local Superintendent's Programs, which are very good but like the local elementary schools, not diverse. The value of the Mark Twain education begins with its diversity and grows from there. The academics are excellent and the talent classes are exciting. It is this excellent education in such a diverse environment that sets Mark Twain apart from every other school in the city.

You can feel the electricity upon entering the front door. The kids are there to learn, with each other and from each other. It is a place where doing all your home work is cool; it is okay to be a nerd. My kids came home excited about new ideas and different customs; they made good friends with kids of all cultures from all over the city. And in the time since middle school for each of them, they have kept those friends. In our home, Mark Twain has made a difference. We are forever part of a larger community.

When it was time to choose high schools, my kids, each in their own turn, were adamant about the continued presence of one thing from their middle school experience: diversity. In their words, "White bread is boring."

My daughter is now a senior in LaGuardia HS on the upper West side of Manhattan. She is looking at colleges now and diversity still tops her list of what a school must offer. My son is a freshman in Brooklyn Tech High School in Fort Greene, Brooklyn and is completely comfortable in his new environment. Both are successful and happy with strong work ethics.

I believe that Mark Twain gave them the roots that allowed them to stretch their wings. You are responsible for everything that Mark Twain is and offers. I believe that what you created is neither outdated nor unnecessary. If Mark Twain were to cease using admission guidelines, it would cease to be diverse. NYC would lose. The children would lose. What we need is more Mark Twains.

Thank you for creating Mark Twain in Coney Island.

Sincerely,
Betty Golembeski
Betty Golembeski